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INTRODUCTION

Originally created by game developer Sid Meier and released for sale by his company MicroProse in 1991, *Civilization* is one of the most popular computer role playing games ever created.[1] Widely praised upon its release, *The Guardian* called *Civilization I*, "the world's greatest computer game."[2] Prior to the release of the game's original version (herein, referred to as, '*Civilization I*'), Meier developed other popular games for MicroProse, including an array of flight simulators before pioneering the genre of role-playing simulation games with *Sid Meier's Pirates!* (1987) and *Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon* (1990).

While it is difficult to quantify the original game's popularity without access to sales data, *Civilization* developed a large swath of devoted players, extensive *Civilization*-dedicated online forums, and three subsequent releases of newer versions. When Sid Meier founded the Firaxis company in 1996, Microprose retained ownership of the *Civilization* franchise, which was eventually acquired by Take Two Interactive in 2004.[3] In 2005, Meier was asked by Take Two Interactive to re-develop the franchise and produce third and fourth versions of the game. Firaxis is currently set to release a much-hyped fifth version, *Civilization V*, in late 2010.[4]

A. Structural Anatomy of a Work

CIVLIZATION

The first version of the game was released for play as single-player computer game software for Amiga 500 and DOS operating systems.[5] Subsequent releases of the game for other operating platforms followed in 1992 and 1993.[6] Versions for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System and Sega Genesis game consoles were released in 1994.[7] In 1995, a

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[1] IGN Staff, *The Top 25 PC Games of All Time* (July 24, 2000). Accessed February 28, 2010 at <http://pc.ign.com/articles/082/082486p1.html>. The results of this online trade publication's rankings placed *Civilization* fourth, behind Meier's 1988 game, *Pirates!*.

[2] Jack Schofield, *Sid Meier, the man responsible for Civilization as we know it, talks to Jack Schofield*, in <u>The Guardian</u> (November 10, 1994).

[3] Email interview with Kelley Gilmore, Marketing Director, Firaxis Games, April 9, 2010.

[4] <http://www.civilization.com/>

[5] *The Timeline*. Accessed February 28, 2010 at <http://freeciv.wikia.com/wiki/Timeline>.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

multi-player remake online-version of *Civilization I*, called *CivNet*, was created by Meier, and parallel development on the Open Source version, *FreeCiv* began.[8]

Meier's original PC *Civilization* software is based in the C programming language.[9] The game's user interfaces are a mouse and a keyboard. Meier created the game using an IBM PC, with a maximum of 640K of memory and 16-color EGA graphics.[10] In interviews, Meier has admitted his limited role in designing versions of the game for non-PC platforms, stating:

> "We would supply the source, the original code, but often that was contracted. I know there were some versions done on Japanese consoles that were very strange. We had some involvement, but it wasn't direct involvement…I thought of the PC version [of *Civilization*] as the definitive version."[11]

B. Behaviours

BASIC GAMEPLAY

The general déroulement of game play in *Civilization* parallels the board game *Risk* in that players spend their time as omniscient administrators of competing 'units' on a map. With each rotating turn, units are added and strategic relationships change. However, whereas *Risk*'s objectives are purely militaristic and geographic, *Civilization* involves additional components of city and infrastructure building, population sustainment, territorial discovery, quests for 'enlightenment,' and other inferred processes of developing a 'civilization.'

The human player competes other against artificial intelligence (AI) players, rotating turns. Discrete players are assigned discrete 'civilizations,' or teams. With each turn, players' civilizations are allotted additional units and resources, and players adjust various progress monitoring controls (food production, the construction of infrastructure) to augment the units and resources they receive in subsequent turns. Such units are role-based, and serve different functions within the game strategy. For example: play begins with 'Settlers' (a unit

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[8] Ibid.

[9] John Minson, *The Programmer's Progress*, in <u>The Guardian</u> (January 23, 1992) Pg. 29.

[10] Benj Edwards, *The History of Civilization* (July 18, 2007) Pg. 6. Accessed February 28, 2010 at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/1523/the_history_of_civilization.php?>.

[11] Benj Edwards, *The History of Civilization* (July 18, 2007) Pg. 7. Accessed February 28, 2010 at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/1523/the_history_of_civilization.php?>.

with an icon of a covered wagon) founding cities, where production of subsequent units and resources takes place; 'Explorers' (icons resembling a Conquistador) are units with additional board movement capacities, who help to uncover the game map from its native blackness; 'Phalanx' (an icon akin to a Roman sentry) are military units, designed for defending cities against attack from rival civilizations. Inter-player interaction—between the human player and the multiple AI players—occurs primarily in unit-to-unit combat situations, with the outcome relying on an array of programmed factors (types of combating units; unit strength/health; etc.).

DISPLAY & VISUAL LAYOUT

The visually-textured square-grid game board takes up the majority of the normal game play screen and is, perhaps, one of the crucial elements to *Civilization* and subsequent versions. (In fact, in subsequent versions the basic grid-like board was always retained; the resolution

of the grid (and corollary scale and greater variety of features on the grid) was simply increased.) The extent of each unit's range of movement is determined by this grid, and the ability to move from one square to the next is parsed out turn by turn.

Other, smaller, windows and drop-down menus comprise the normal game play screen, as well. Principally, these windows and menus either enable action functions, or display some indication of progress in the game. Akin to a 'help' menu, the 'Civilopedia' menu tab contains an index to game information.

As the game progresses, various animated sequences replace the normal game play screen. For example: whenever the city of one player is conquered by another, an animated screen of marching soldiers appears and a text box describes how much gold was plundered; whenever a new advancement in technology or intellectual enlightenment is discovered, a related full-screen animation plays; whenever a city builds some aspect of new infrastructure, an animation of said infrastructure plays.

MUSIC

The accompanying music of *Civilization I* is a droning, lyric-less, classical music. The game's music is an infamously unpopular aspect of the original game.[12]

HARDWARE DEPENDENCIES

The concepts of game speed and feel, which are largely tied to the game's native hardware specifications (eg. processing speed and 640K RAM), are at once both integral and irrelevant to *Civilization I*. The game play of Meier's magnum opus is legendarily lengthy—an entire game can last anywhere in excess of 20 hours, with players able to pause and save their game at any point.[13] Some accounts typify game length at 100 hours.[14] Thus, while the speed

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[12] Jack Schofield, *Sid Meier, the man responsible for Civilization as we know it, talks to Jack Schofield*, in The Guardian (November 10, 1994).

[13] Jack Schofield, *Sid Meier, the man responsible for Civilization as we know it, talks to Jack Schofield*, in The Guardian (November 10, 1994).

[14] Cairn MacGregor, *Civilization goes network: Now you can play Sid Meier's classic game against human opponents*, in The Montréal Gazette (December 16, 1995) Pg. J4.

of any hardware's computer processor is crucial to the fast rendering and display of images, and the ability of the game to move progress, such speed is not as essential to any particular action or reaction on the part of the human player. At no point in game play would a computer's slowed processing speed cause the human player to be at a disadvantage (outside of causing the player to spend more time playing the game). In terms of the human interface with the game, both the keyboard and mouse are still the predominant computer interfaces.

C. Other *Civilization* Instantiations

CIVNET

Aside from the introduction of the game to other platforms and gaming environments, the 1995 introduction of *CivNet* was the first major departure from the original *Civilization I*. Graphics were much improved, thanks to newly-standardized 256-color VGA displays, and a new variety of players could be accommodated.[15] Players could rotate turns at the same computer, aka "hot seat mode," and players could connect over a local area network (LAN) or bulletin board system (BBS) to compete against each other using different computer terminals. Unlike the DOS-based original version, *CivNet* was released for play with Windows platforms, and was reported to be noticeably slower than the original.[16]

CIVILIZATION II, III, and IV

Civilization II was released in 1996 by MicroProse, after Meier had left the company to start Firaxis. As such, he was not involved in its development. The game brand was sold several times before it was acquired by the Take Two Interactive company. Firaxis Marketing Director Kelley Gilmore describe the reunion of Meier and the game:

> "When Take Two purchased Firaxis in 2005, they reunited Sid with Civ and

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[15] Cairn MacGregor, *Civilization goes network: Now you can play Sid Meier's classic game against human opponents*, in <u>The Montréal Gazette</u> (December 16, 1995) Pg. J4.
[16] Ibid.

we've gone on to create the Civilization III and IV series, as well as Civilization Revolution and the soon to be released Civilization V and Civilization Network for Facebook."[17]

Meier describes subsequent versions, thus:

> "in later *Civilizations*, we tried to flesh out, and make more interesting, some of the other victory paths. We tried to include more female leaders in later games. We tried to include more third world, Eastern, or less familiar leaders in other games, and to include more civilizations from around the world. We did include a bigger variety of civilizations and peoples as we expanded it."[18]

Civilization IV marked one of the biggest shifts in the conceptual complexity and visual quality of the game. Meier relates,

> "with *Civilization IV*, we tried to take something out with every new thing we put in. We felt we where bumping up against the limit of complexity for *Civilization* game players. We have new ideas, but we take the general approach that for every new thing we put in, or more complicated thing we put in, we either simplify or take out something that was in there before. It's a very rich topic; we could put so much stuff in there that we could overwhelm the player. We are sensitive to that."[19]
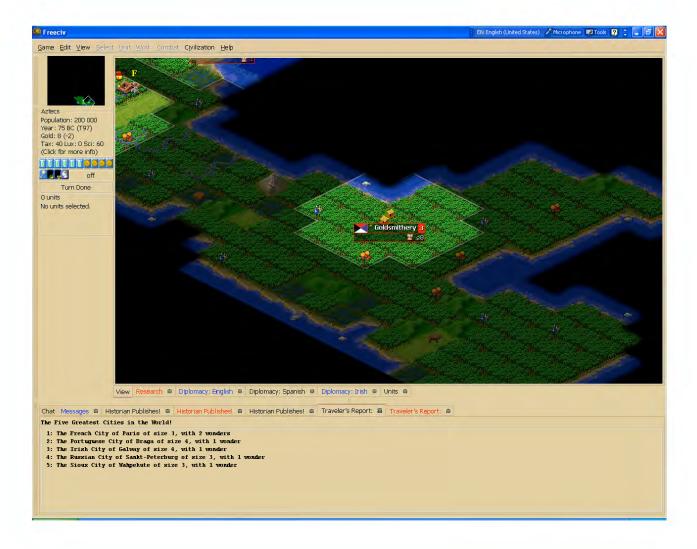
FREECIV

In the mid-1990s, a group of *Civilization* enthusiasts designed an Open Source version of the game and called it *FREECIV*. A close resemblance to the second and third commercial releases, the Open Source project is still very popular. Below, a screen grab from the downloadable application:[20]

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[17] Email interview with Kelley Gilmore, Marketing Director, Firaxis Games, April 9, 2010.

[18] Benj Edwards, *The History of Civilization* (July 18, 2007) Pg. 8. Accessed February 28, 2010 at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/1523/the_history_of_civilization.php?>.

[19] Benj Edwards, *The History of Civilization* (July 18, 2007) Pg. 9. Accessed February 28, 2010 at: <http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/1523/the_history_of_civilization.php?>.

[20] Accessed March 30, 2010 at: <http://freeciv.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page>.

MODS

The *Civilization* franchise has proved so popular as to engender an array of 'mods'—user modifications to the game code. According to Caio Camargo in a recent issue of *Crossroads* magazine, *Civilization IV* was designed by Firaxis, "from the beginning with user modification in mind."[21] One example of a popular *Civilization IV* mod is the fantasy mod, *Fall From Heaven*, which permits users to add role playing powers such as, magic, spells and new creatures.[22] According to Kelley Gilmore, the new *Civilization V* will feature a special emphasis on supporting player mods:

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[21] Caio Camargo, *Modding: Changing the Game, Changing the Industry*, in Crossroads Vol. 13 No. 2 Winter 2006.
[22] Caio Camargo, *Modding: Changing the Game, Changing the Industry*, in Crossroads Vol. 13 No. 2 Winter 2006.

"We view mods as an exciting part of the global Civilization community. We do our best to create tools that enable Civ fans to create all kinds of unique mods that enhance their game experience and keep them engaged with the game over a long period of time. When we release Civilization V this fall we'll deliver the most extensive set of modding tools to date, as well as the SDK for the game which will give modders everything they need to create their dream Civ game. We're even building an in-game community hub where players can access a browser to share mods and visit fansites without ever leaving the game. By empowering players to create fresh content for the game we keep them closely involved with Civ to the point where Civ becomes their hobby, not just a gameplay experience. We then have a thriving and growing global community of folks who are chomping at the bit for the next version of Civ to be released."[23]

4. Preservation Risks & Recommendations

Civilization was written in C—one of the most widely-implemented programming languages. however, 16-color EGA graphics are not the standard, so display could be inaccurate or over-compensated. Further complicating matters is the question of the existence of the original code. Currently, according to Firaxi' Kelley Gilmore, it is not certain where the original code for *Civilization* is:

> it's hard to know where the code for the original Civilization game exists currently. We don't have any inventory of the game, however, there are a number of folks at Firaxis who have physical copies of the first Civilization."[24]

It is clear that preservation of the original game is not a principle concern of Firaxis'—a matter complicated by the fact that they do not own the rights to the original game, despite the fact that its original creator is Firaxis' head of operations and game development.

VIDEO RECORDINGS OF GAMEPLAY

One popular method of video game documentation—videorecordings of game play—seems less applicable to *Civilization*. For example: whereas a 'scroller' game such as, *Super Mario Bros.*, might be well documented by video of players playing through each level, left-to-right, *Civilization*'s complex and non-standardized game development does not implicitly lend itself to authoritative video documentation; one game will never be the same as the next.

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[23] Email interview with Kelley Gilmore, Marketing Director, Firaxis Games, April 9, 2010.
[24] Email interview with Kelley Gilmore, Marketing Director, Firaxis Games, April 9, 2010.

Nevertheless, video recordings of game play may be one of the easiest ways to document general visual layout, and speed of play for *Civilization* as well as a good method of comparing alterations across different versions of the game. Furthermore, they are an incredibly easy way of documenting the look and feel of what playing *Civilization* is like—a consideration particularly important when one considers the myriad of subsequent official versions, unofficial community Open Source versions, and player-designed mods.